

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001642

SIPDIS

STATE ALSO FOR DRL/IL MHARPOLE
LABOR FOR DOL/ILAB TFAULKNER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/02/2015

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE PROGRESS REGARDING TEACHERS' STRIKE

REF: KINSHASA 1633

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) During an October 3 breakfast, Presidency Ambassador-at-Large Antoine Ghonda told the Ambassador that government officials are very concerned about the ongoing teachers' strike (reported reftel), and the risks that this could escalate into widespread social unrest. Ghonda reported that President Kabila had a meeting with the public sector union leadership on Saturday, October 1, for a frank review of GDRC budget realities. Ghonda reported that the meeting had gone relatively well. The union leadership subsequently emerged from the meeting to make a moderate and positive statement.

12. (C) The local press is reporting a "general assembly" of the unionized striking teachers Monday, October 3, presumably to review status of talks and expectations following the Saturday meeting. Ghonda appeared optimistic that, after this meeting, teachers could resume work this week.

13. (C) Responding to a question, Ghonda said that he did not believe that the GDRC has yet proposed a \$50/month minimum to the teachers or other striking government workers. He added that he doubts if such an offer could be tabled, at least pending further analysis of the cost implications with the Ministers of Budget and Finance, scheduled to return October 3 from Bank/Fund meetings in Washington. In addition to the teachers, Ghonda pointed out that difficult talks with increasingly restive medical personnel are on the horizon, and there is only so much money in GDRC accounts. Nonetheless, he added, the union leaders appeared during the weekend to have a better understanding of the underlying budget realities.

14. (C) Comment: Up to now, the GDRC/union exchanges have been a dialogue of the deaf, with escalating tension and increasingly hard-line position statements. It was not even until discussion over the September 24 weekend that two key unions agreed to participate in negotiations. Talk had grown in Kinshasa of a "blank year," in essence the forced cancellation of the entire academic year. The moderate tone of the union leaders' statement following the Kabila meeting represents a welcome change to the pattern. Whether whatever understandings emerged from that meeting are sufficient to resolve what is a growing political crisis remains to be seen, but at least it would seem to be a positive step back from the brink. End comment.
MEECE